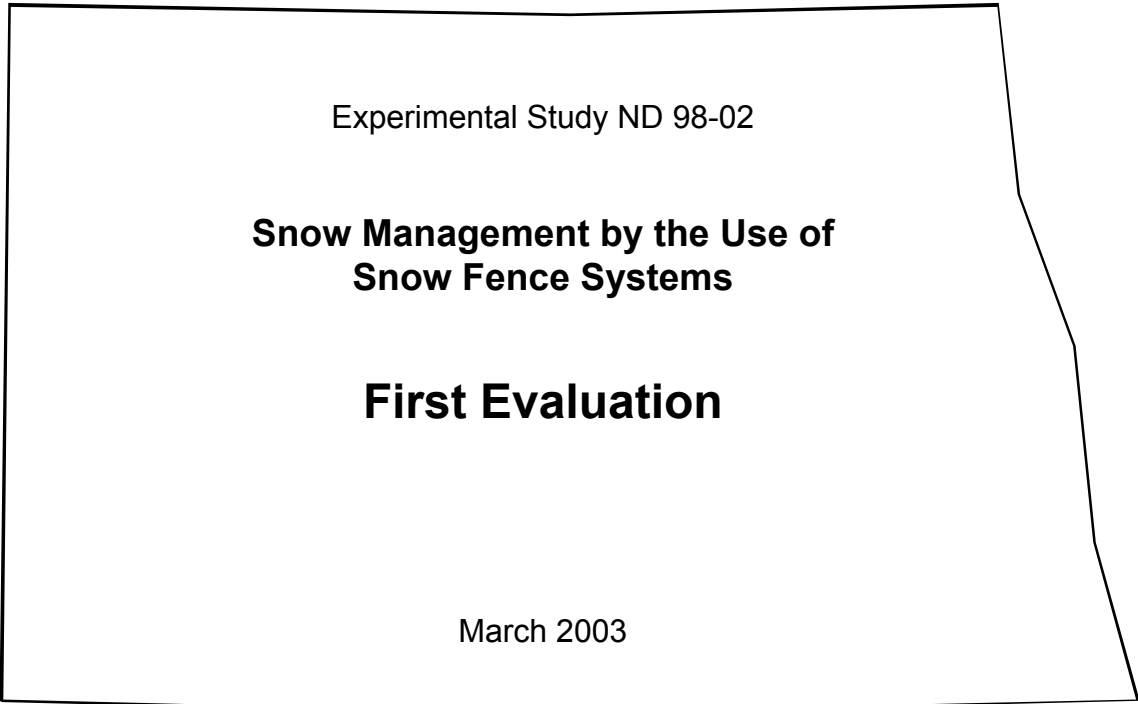


**NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**MATERIALS AND RESEARCH
DIVISION**



Experimental Study ND 98-02

**Snow Management by the Use of
Snow Fence Systems**

First Evaluation

March 2003

Prepared by

NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

Website: <http://www.discovernd.com/dot/>

DIRECTOR

David A. Sprynczynatyk, P.E.

MATERIALS AND RESEARCH DIVISION

Ron Horner

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION									
EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT REPORT									
EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT	EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT NO.						CONSTRUCTION PROJ NO		LOCATION
	1	STATE ND	Y EAR 98	-	NUMBER 02	SURF	8	Burleigh & Cass 28 Counties	
	EVALUATION FUNDING						NEEP NO.	PROPRIETARY FEATURE?	
	48	1 X	HP&R	3	DEMONSTRATION			X	Yes
		2	CONSTRUCTION	4	IMPLEMENTATION		49	51	No
SHORT TITLE	TITLE 52 Snow Management by the Use of Snow Fence Systems								
THIS FORM	DATE 140	MO. 03	--	YR. 2003	REPORTING 1 INITIAL 2 X ANNUAL 3 FINAL				
KEY WORDS	KEY WORD 1				KEY WORD 2				
	145 MAINTENANCE				167 SNOWCONTROL				
	KEY WORD 3				KEY WORD 4				
	189 SNOW FENCE				211				
	UNIQUE WORD				PROPRIETARY FEATURE NAME				
	233				255				
CHRONOLOGY	Date Work Plan Approved		Date Feature Constructed:		Evaluation Scheduled Until:		Evaluation Extended Until:		Date Evaluation Terminated:
	10-1997		12-1997		12-2002		12-2006		
	277		281		285		289		293
QUANTITY AND COST	QUANTITY OF UNITS (ROUNDED TO WHOLE NUMBERS)			UNITS			UNIT COST (Dollars, Cents)		
				1 LIN. FT 2 SY 3 SY-IN 4 CY			5 TON 6 LBS 7 EACH 8 X LUMP SUM		
	297			305			306		
AVAILABLE EVALUATION REPORTS	CONSTRUCTION			PERFORMANCE			FINAL		
	X 315			X					
EVALUATION	CONSTRUCTION PROBLEMS				PERFORMANCE				
	1 X	NONE			1	EXCELLENT			
	2	SLIGHT			2	GOOD			
	3	MODERATE			3 X	SATISFACTORY			
	4	SIGNIFICANT			4	MARGINAL			
	318	SEVERE			319	UNSATISFACTORY			
APPLICATION	1	ADOPTED AS PRIMARY STD.			4 X	PENDING			
	2	PERMITTED ALTERNATIVE			5	REJECTED			
	320	ADOPTED CONDITIONALLY			6	NOT CONSTRUCTED			
REMARKS	(Explain in remarks if 3, 4, 5, or 6 is checked)								
	321 Installation of the snow fence systems went well. The structural snow fences are in good condition but do require maintenance to keep the polymer straps tensioned and to reattach the loose brackets. The living snow fence is thriving and has grown significantly. The snow fences have shown the capability to collect snow in drifts. But there has not been enough snow to evaluate if the snow fences have an effect on roadway conditions								

Experimental Study ND 98-02

**Snow Management by the
Use of Snow Fence Systems**

First Evaluation

March 2003

Written by
Curt Dunn/Steven Henrichs

Disclaimer

The contents of this report reflect the views of the author or authors who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not reflect the official views of the North Dakota Department of Transportation or the Federal Highway Administration. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose and Need	1
Objective	1
Scope	2
Location	3
Design	4
Construction	5
Evaluation	6
Summary	12
Appendix A: Proposed Plans	A-1

Snow Management by the Use Of Snow Fence Systems

Purpose and Need

North Dakota winters, due to high winds and open prairies, have a potential for drifting snow on our roadways. Proper road design can be effective in preventing snowdrifts and poor visibility. However, there are isolated areas along our highway system that have a tendency to accumulate snow and exhibit poor driving conditions. Many of these areas are due to grade separations at intersections and structures.

During the 1996/97 winter season, the interstate system was forced to close on many more occasions due to blowing snow and snow accumulation than in past winters. After the snowstorms ceased, the interstate system remained closed while maintenance crews worked to open the roadways. The closures could be minimized if proper management and control of blowing snow could be attained. Snow management may be attained in these highly vulnerable areas through carefully designed living and structural snow fences. Addressing these problem areas is critical to ensure our roadways stay safe for the traveling public.

Objective

The objectives are to collect snow in drifts before it reaches the highway or highway structure, improve visibility by reducing the concentration of snow in the air, and reduce snow removal and highway maintenance costs.

Scope

North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) has installed demonstration structural snow fence systems at four sites located on the interstate system. These four sites were problem areas due to poor visibility and snow accumulation on the roadway. One of the sites has an existing living snow fence, consisting of a young shelterbelt of Ash and Pine trees. Photo 1 shows a six feet tall structural snow fence with the living snow fence in February 1998.

The structural sites and the living snow fence will be evaluated to determine if snow fence systems can be utilized on a larger scale on North Dakota roadways.



Photo 1 - Structural snow fence and living snow fence in February 1998.

Location

Two test sites are located in the Fargo District and two test sites are located in the Bismarck District. The sites are strategically located in the vicinity of either a grade separation or an interchange along Interstates I-29 and I-94. Refer to Figure 1 for the project location.

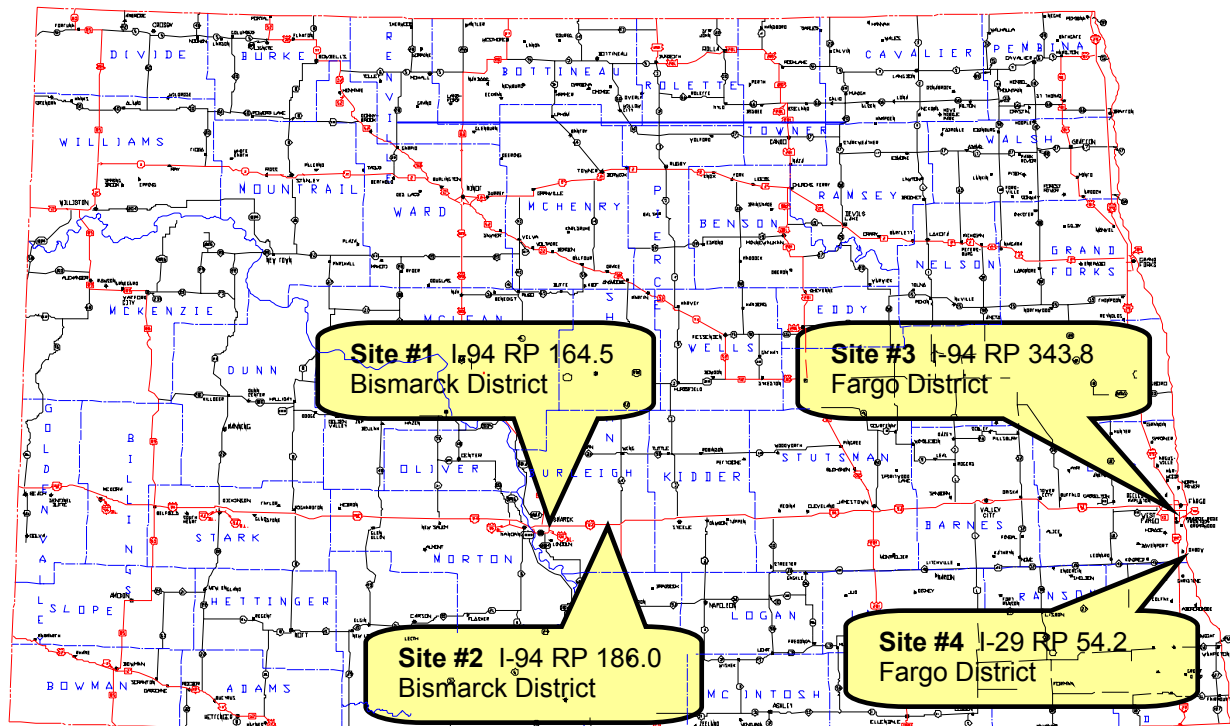


Figure 1 - Project Location.

Design

The North Dakota Department of Transportation consulted with Tabler & Associates from Longmont, Colorado for the design of the structural snow fence test sections. Tabler & Associates specialize in engineering for snow, sand, dust, and wind control. The procedures that Tabler & Associates used to determine the required height and placement of fences are those recommended in the Strategic Highway Research Program Report SHRP-H-381, "**Design Guidelines for the Control of Blowing and Drifting Snow,**" 1994 (364 pages). Tabler & Associates proposed plans are provided in Appendix A.

The structural snow fences were constructed with a post and rail design. The rail is a composite polymer strap in which three 10.5-gauge wires are embedded. This product, marketed as Centaur HTP fencing, is five inches wide and comes in lengths up to 660 feet. Because 40% to 50% fence porosity is considered ideal, the straps are spaced five inches apart. The straps are mounted to the posts by brackets that allow the straps to freely slide along the length of the strap and the straps are tensioned with a ratchet system permanently attached to a post on one end of the fence. Photo 2 shows the polymer straps being tensioned with the ratchet system during construction.



Photo 2 - Polymer straps are tensioned with a ratchet system.

Construction

State maintenance forces constructed the snow fence systems. Construction went well and maintenance forces were very efficient in installing the fences. Crews of approximately four to six workers were assigned to each site. The Fargo district used salvaged power poles as fence posts. The Bismarck district purchased new wooden posts.

The proposed plans for site 1 (I-94 RP 164.5) are shown in Appendix A. The six-foot and four-foot fences along the right-of-way were constructed in mid-December 1997. The proposed plans show three ten-foot fences that are not within the right-of-way, but these fences were never constructed. Instead, a single ten-foot fence was constructed in 1998. This fence is approximately 200' north of the right-of-way and is parallel to the 6' fence constructed in 1997. The approximate location of this fence is shown in blue in Appendix A. Site 1 had an existing living snow fence that was planted in 1994. The living snow fence was planted along the right-of-way and consists of two rows of trees planted 12' apart. One row is Green Ash and the other row is Pine.

The proposed plans for site 2 are shown in Appendix A. The snow fences between Interstate 94 and the frontage roads were constructed in December 1997. The proposed plans show a long ten-foot fence that is to north and west of a communications tower. This fence was never constructed.

Appendix A shows the proposed plans for site 3 and site 4. Both sites were built according to the proposed plans. Site 3 was constructed in December of 1997 and site 4 was constructed in 1998.

Evaluation

The snow fence systems were visually inspected in the summer of 2002 for structural integrity and for signs of deterioration. The living snow fence was inspected for survival and growth of the trees.

Sites 2, 3, and 4 were inspected on June 12, 2002 and site 1 was inspected on August 12, 2002. The overall condition of the snow fences was good. The ratchet hardware showed signs of corrosion but appeared to be operable. The polymer strap material showed no signs of deterioration but on most snow fences the polymer straps need to be adjusted by tensioning the straps. Photo 3 shows a fence with polymer straps that need tensioning.



Photo 3 - Loose polymer straps.

It was typical to see, that one or two brackets per fence had become loose. These brackets hold the polymer straps in position and are attached to the posts by screws. The brackets had become loose because the screws had pulled out of the posts. It appeared the screws had pulled out because the posts had cracked. The salvage posts had more cracks and loose brackets than the purchased posts. This problem could probably be addressed by using bigger screws. The loose brackets didn't appear to be a problem. Photo 4 shows a bracket that had become loose.



Photo 4 - Bracket that has become loose.

At site 4, a fence post had tilted and had caused some of the polymer straps to become loose and other straps to bind. Photo 5 shows the tilted post. This post was near the north end of an eight-foot fence that is located between Interstate 29 and the southbound exit ramp. This end of the fence is in an area that appeared to collect water and the ground at the base of the fence post was wet and quite soft.



Photo 5 - A tilted fence post at Site 4.

Site 1 also had a fence post that had tilted. This post was the eastern-most post of the six-foot fence that runs along the right-of-way. The post was loose in the ground and could be rocked by hand. It was in standing water and the ground was very soft.

The living snow fences at site 1 appeared to be thriving and no trees appeared to have died. The Green Ash trees are approximately 12'-16' tall and the Pine trees are approximately 8'-10' tall. The condition of the living snow fence is shown in photos 6 and 7. The height of the living snow fence in 1998 is shown in photo 1.



Photo 6 - A view of the living snow fence in 2002.



Photo 7 - Another view of the living snow fence in 2002.

The snow fences were evaluated for snow collection on January 29, 2003. There was two to five inches of snow on the ground and there was not enough snow to determine if the snow fences prevented drifting onto the roadway.

All of the snow fences had collected a drift on the downwind side of the fence and most had also collected a drift upwind of the fence. Downwind of some snow fences there was an obvious area where less snow had accumulated on the ground than in the surrounding area. Photo 8 shows a snow fence with an area of less snow accumulation at site 2.

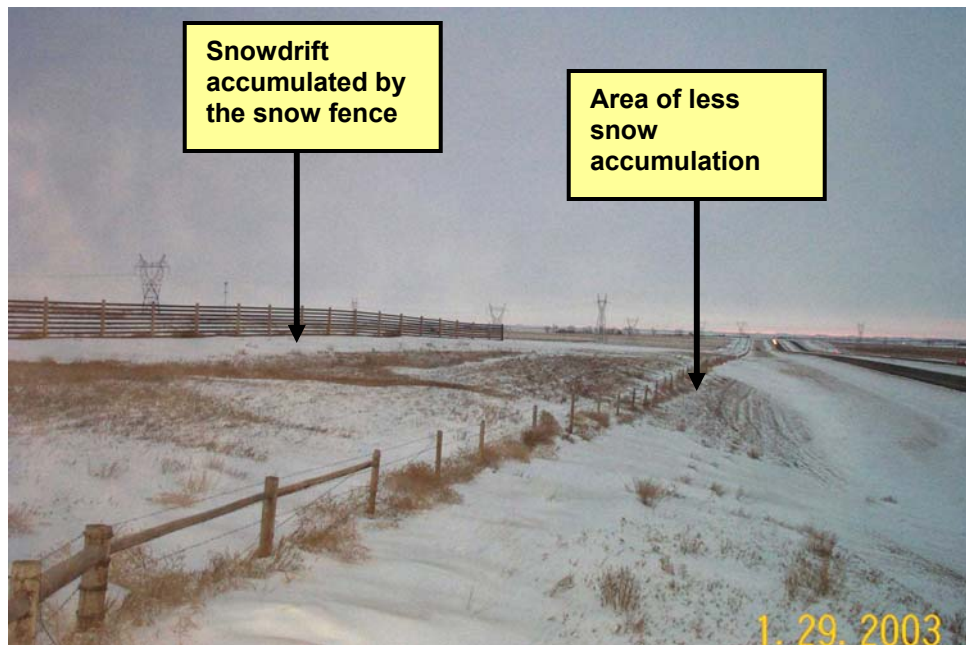


Photo 8 - A snow fence at site 2 in January 2003.

Snow fences at higher locations than surrounding areas appeared to collect more snow than fences in low areas. Photo 9 shows a large drift along a snow fence in a high location on the west side of site 3. Photo 10 shows the relatively small amount of snow collected by a snow fence in a low location at site 3.



Photo 9 - A large drift accumulated by a snow fence at a relatively high location at site 3.



Photo 10 - A snow fence in at a low elevation at site 3 with relatively little snow accumulation.

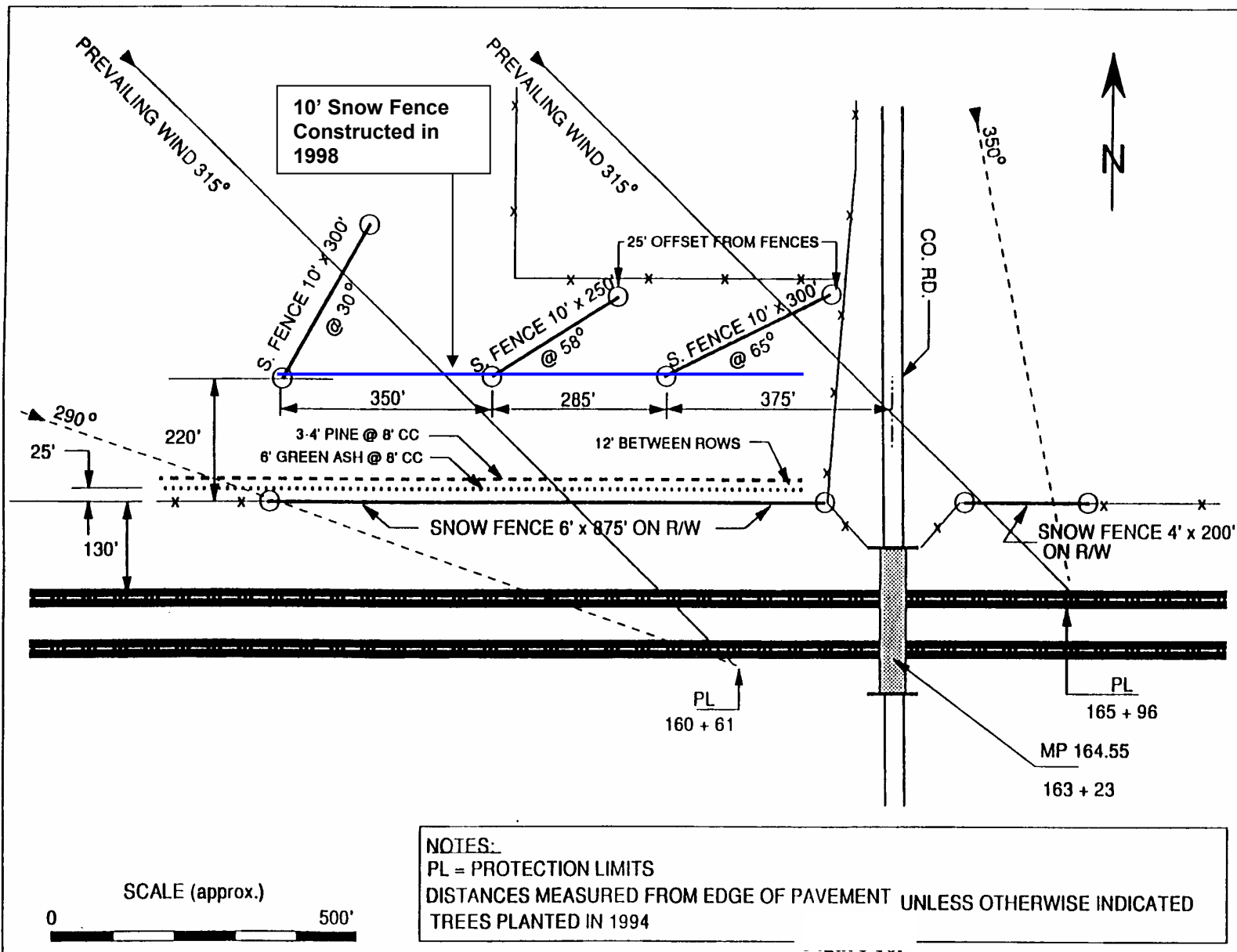
Summary

Installation of the snow fence systems went well. The structural snow fences are in good condition but do require maintenance to keep the polymer straps tensioned and to reattach the loose brackets. The living snow fence is thriving and has grown significantly.

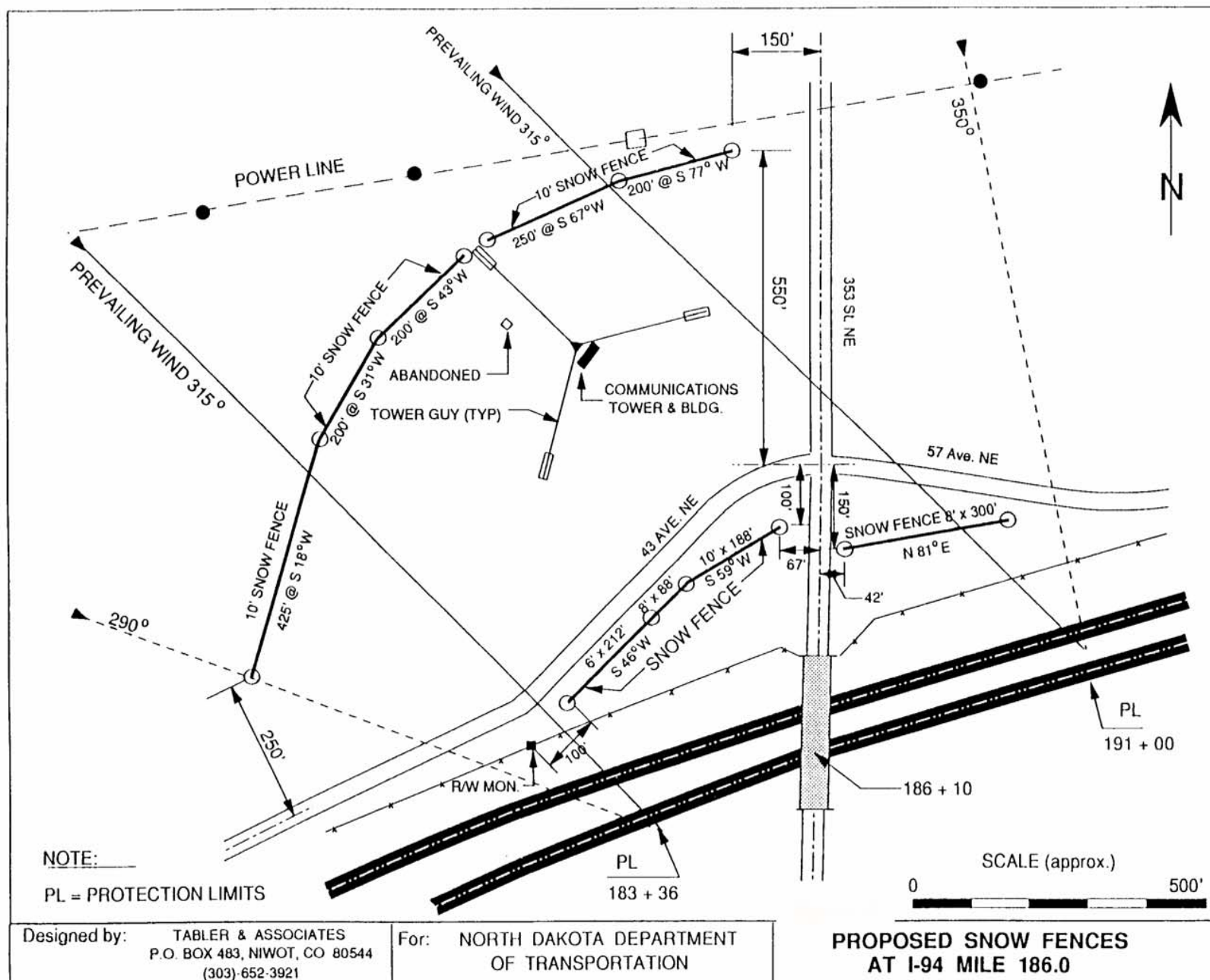
The snow fences have shown the capability to collect snow in drifts. But there has not been enough snow to evaluate if the snow fences have an effect on roadway conditions.

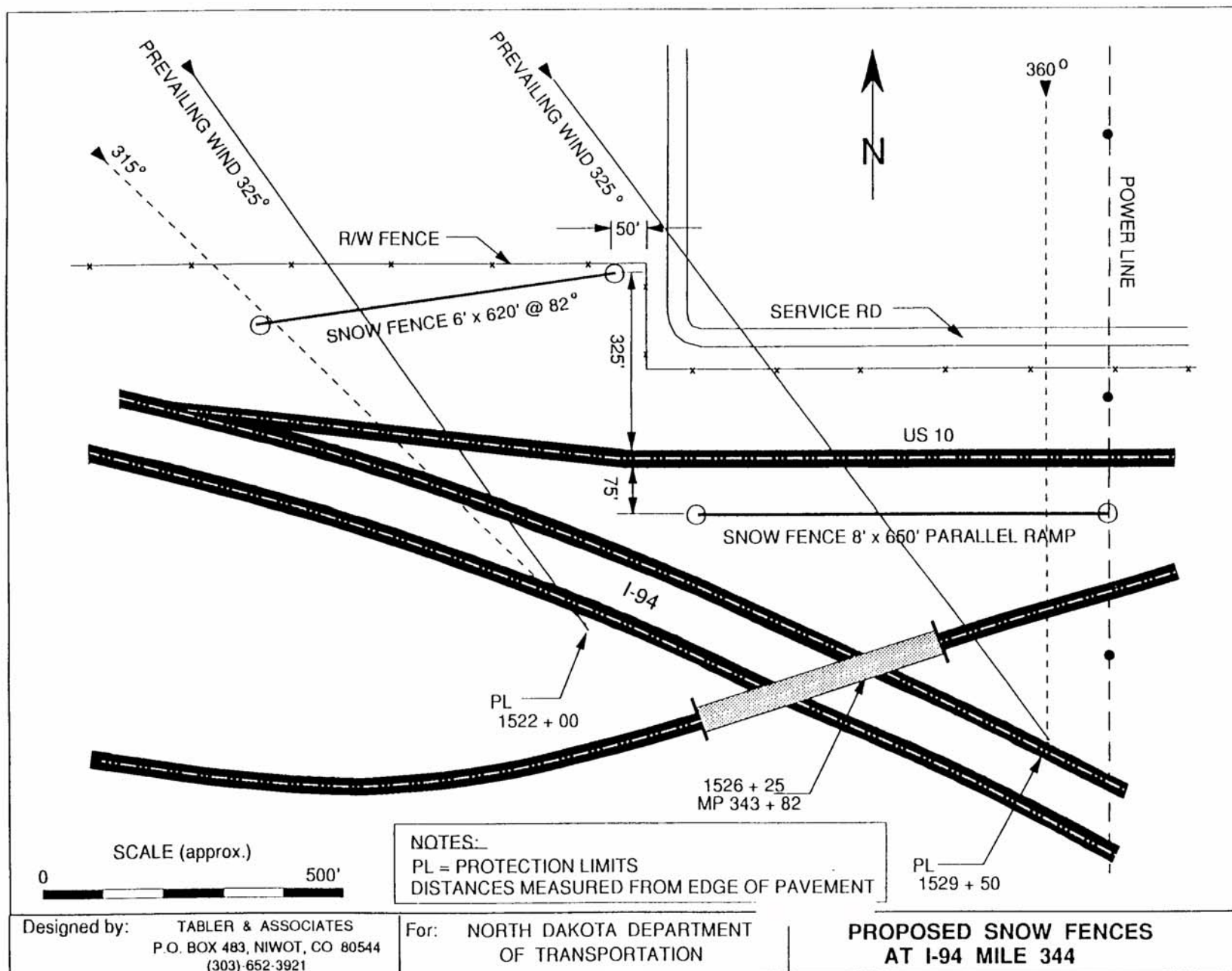
Appendix A

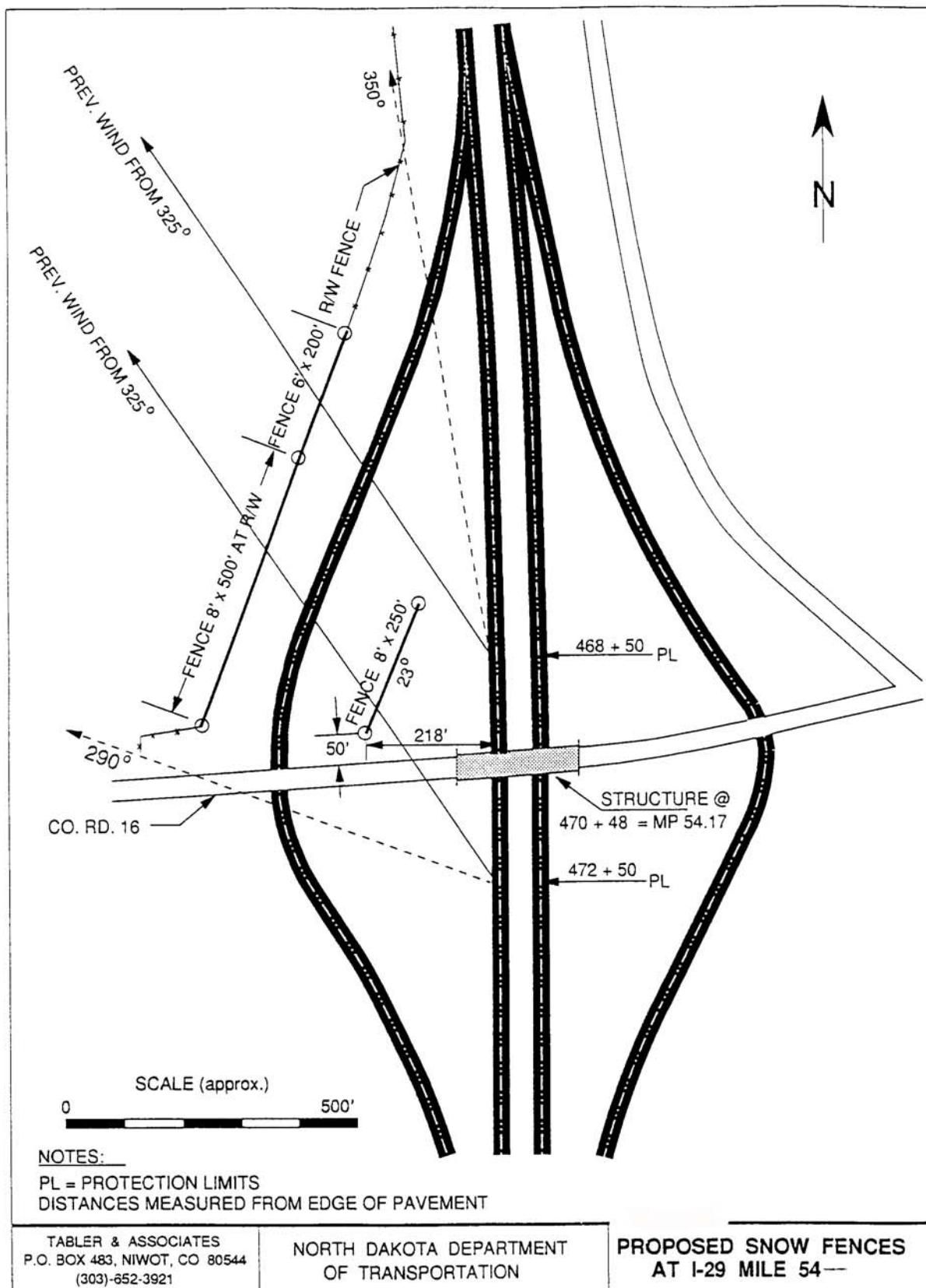
A-1



Site 1







Site 4